

852 cut and the nose, ears, and lower lip are pierced if the child was too weak to have it done when he was very small.

854 When the boys are fairly large they eat with their fathers, and the girls eat with their mothers. The parents teach them no sort of manners and they say neither good morning, good evening, nor thank you. They are brought up in such liberty that they do only what they want, obeying their parents at their whim. The parents do not punish them. The mothers mistreat them sometimes but only in a fury or when vexed, and not to correct them.

● 857 When the girls begin to menstruate, they are made to fast one or two months. So are the boys when they attain their adolescence, and they are slashed with agouti teeth, as we shall indicate when we discuss their drinking parties.

768 When the father dies or leaves his wife all the children stay with
586 the mother and she takes care of them, while the husband does not bother about them any more.

548 There are women among the Caribs who become prostitutes. There
834 are no indecent words among them. Young and old, boys and girls, all call things by their names without any shame whatsoever.

CHAPTER VII

The Huts, Beds, and Pirogues of The Caribs

346 Since they have many enemies who often kidnap them, the Caribs live at Capesterre because there the approach is more difficult and more rarely leeward of the wind for the anchorage of the boats by which they fear being surprised.

621 They are divided into families, and these families are composed of several households which live together and form a sort of hamlet under the father of the family. The father's sons and daughters are
342 married and live in their own huts. They first make a large common hall 627 60, 80, or 100 feet long, more or less, which they call a carbet. Around this large hut they build small ones for individual families.

These huts are made with forked branches stuck in the ground, joined with other pieces of wood which go from one fork to another.

303 seeds of prickly palmettos. They pile these in a mortar, boil them in
 462 water from time to time, and press them as stated above. Others
 462 spin cotton, which occupation they resume at night by the fire. They
 [75] also take care of the sick, and for that they apply themselves to learn-
 ing the medicinal plants which are good for the illnesses. They have
 some excellent remedies which are very [867] effective. We will
 someday know more about them, if it pleases God. Nevertheless,
 [467] neither the men nor the women wear themselves out with work.

CHAPTER IX

Their Drinking Parties

273 We will not call them feasts because they only hold their debaucheries
 to drink and to get drunk, both the men and women. They just call
 them ouicou, which is the drink that they make from cassava, as
 strong as they can for these occasions. They hold them nearly every
 day in various places for various reasons. The most famous drinking
 [726] party is for war. They hold one when the man and woman have their
 849 first male child. They likewise celebrate when they cut off all the
 hair of their children for the first time. Also when their boys are
 881 growing up and attain their adolescence they make them fast, and
 then hold a celebration. The young men in question capture a
 Mansénix or merlin or some other bird of prey and feed it for some
 time preceding the celebration. Then, everybody being assembled,
 the father of the young man takes the bird and kills it on the head of
 his son, and having crushed and ground the body of the bird, puts it
 into water. Then, after slashing the body of his son with agouti teeth
 or something else until the blood comes, he bathes and rubs him with
 this water. Afterwards they make the young man lie very straight
 [90] in a bed which is hung from the top of the hut, and he must maintain
 this posture, or else (they imagine) he will become deformed. If
 he should bend over, he would remain bent, if he should bend a leg,
 the leg would always remain bent. They also make him fast for
 too long a time. Next, they dry the heart and feet of the bird and
 hang them around his neck. For some, who are stronger, they mix
 a great deal of pimento with the water of which we spoke, and make
 them eat the bird's heart, and imagine that that will make the boys
 valiant.

861 they are seldom corrected even if they mistreat their fathers and mothers; most of them are not even reprimanded for such terrible conduct.

576 Nakedness does not shame them The children⁷, and they belch, fart, and carry on all the other necessities of nature without any restraint. Their fathers and mothers do not teach them anything except how to fish, to shoot with a bow, to swim, and to weave small baskets and cotton hammocks.

● 881 When the boys and girls have reached the age of puberty they fast for three weeks or one month and their skin is cut with agouti teeth as we mentioned previously. When the Caribs want to make one of their young men a captain or raise him to the rank of warrior, the young man obtains in advance a bird of prey called Mancefenil, Mansfenil which he feeds until the time it is destined for this ceremony. When this day arrives the father invites the most distinguished and oldest of his friends, and when they come together he has his son sit on a stool and encourages him to be courageous in his battles and to revenge himself on his enemies. He then takes the bird by the feet and breaks and crushes its head by striking it against the head of his son. Although he is almost stunned by the blows he has received, the son must not even raise his eyebrows if he wishes to be considered a brave warrior. Then the father mangles and crushes the body of the bird and soaks it in water with a quantity of pimentos. He cuts the skin of his son all over the body and washes him with this spiced water and finally gives him the heart of the Mancefenil bird to eat. This is done, they say, so that he will become more courageous.

Afterwards a cotton hammock is hung for him from the roof of the house and he is laid stretched out in it. He is to stay there without eating or drinking or moving in any way until his strength is almost gone. They firmly believe that if he should twist himself during this time he would remain in this position for the rest of his life. When the son has passed this test, which is so rigorous that occasionally one of them dies, he passes as a valorous soldier, even though he may very often be only a coward.

584 It should be noticed in speaking of their marriages that the young people do not know what it is to make love before they are married. When they wish to marry a girl who does not belong to them by right

868 to be so accurate that they could hit a bough. The girls learned from their mothers how to cook, till the fields, weave cotton, and make hammocks.

881 **Puberty and marriage.**—At the age of puberty both sexes fasted for 3 or 4 weeks and had their skins scarified with agouti teeth. This was the time when the girls assumed the aprons and cotton anklets of women. Thereafter they were not allowed to run free but had to remain close to their mothers.

The youths were taught to value courage and endurance and were periodically rubbed with the fat of slaughtered *Arawak* to make them brave. When they had reached the age of becoming warriors they were tested in these qualities. The youth having been seated on a stool in the center of the carbet, his father crushed a bird over his head, scarified his body, and rubbed the cuts with pepper sauce. Then the boy ate the heart of the bird, to give himself courage, and his father beat him. He had to endure this entire ceremony without flinching. When it was over he lay in a hammock and fasted for 3 days. Then he demonstrated his skill in wielding a club and was accepted into the company of the warriors, being given a new name. His father gave a feast in celebration.

[766] Specialization in shamanism began in childhood, when the candidate abstained from several kinds of flesh and underwent rigorous fasts. At puberty he was apprenticed to one of the older shamans, after going through a scarification ceremony comparable to that given to warriors.

582 The *Carib* youth were supposed to be chaste. Except for prostitutes, contact between young men and young women was tabooed. So was marriage with mothers, sisters, and step-sisters. Cross-cousin marriage was preferred, the sororate also being practiced, but a man was allowed other wives as well. Fathers presented their daughters to the successful warriors at the feast following each raid, and the warriors could also marry the women they had taken captive during the raid. The men with the most wives were considered the most prominent.

Girls often became engaged during childhood and sometimes were brought up by their fiancé's family. The groom usually had to obtain the consent of the prospective bride's parents. There was no ceremony except for an occasional feast, the only time the wife ever ate with her husband. Residence was matrilocal, except in the case of a chief. Each wife lived in a separate hut in her own village, often on a different island.

562 The wives were treated as servants; they dressed and fed their husbands, cleaned and thatched the houses, tilled the fields, and carried all burdens.

[586] Their husbands could abandon them without ceremony, in which case the younger children remained with the mother and the older children were divided according to sex. Teknonymy was practiced, and a man had to avoid speaking to his wife's relatives.

888 **Death and burial.**—The *Carib* sometimes killed the old and the infirm. They feared the dead and never mentioned their names. When a man

scale of worth than his present want—I do not say need, advisedly: 437
 I have seen a girl starve her baby in order to procure it a baptismal robe it would use only once. When he has made up his mind to buy or sell, the worst bargain in the world will not deter the Carib, nor persuade him to await a better opportunity. On the other hand, he will let you vainly wait months for a basket or some other article you have ordered from him, and appear dissatisfied, if and when he finally condescends to bring it, with the price originally set by himself. 181

For a number of reasons I have not been able to push my inquiries into Carib life and lore—and especially with regard to the archeological material, which I believe to be plentiful—as far as I should have wished. Perhaps the same petty jealousies of which I have spoken prevented some members of the tribe from communicating to me—or at least prompted them to demand exorbitant sums for their only possibly valuable information—all that they knew of their nation's language and legend. Less excusable is the crass ignorance of many Creoles, white and colored alike, in a position to know better, as to the nature and aims of ethnological research. The ridicule and suspicions of such individuals in a pseudo-civilized community inevitably render the student's task all the harder. On the other hand, I am profoundly grateful to those others with whom I have come in contact, of whatever color or race, for their sincere collaboration and loyal friendship.

SOCIAL AND SEXUAL

Social organization, in as far as it can be said to exist at all, is extremely slack among the Caribs today, and appears to have been so always. Previously there were two chiefs in Dominica: One for the windward side, another for the leeward side of the island, but their authority was never more than of an advisory or paternal nature, even where it was combined with that of *magnétiseur* or sorcerer. Even the punishment of crimes committed within the tribe was left to the individuals or family concerned. The chiefs, though often of the same family, seem to have been chosen by common consent for some recognized superiority or sagacity (ordeals of pain or hunger endurance were common) rather than by hereditary privilege. In war time, on the contrary, supreme authority was given to another commander, or war chief, who usually led the combined armies of Dominica and Guadeloupe. Today, in spite of certain local prejudices and jealousies, the only social unit which can be said to subsist is the family. 621

No puberty ceremonies have survived. Nevertheless, girls and women maintain a certain seclusion at their menstrual periods, especially the first, and do not leave the house, even to bathe in the river or for their personal necessities. Were they to do so, it is said 841 181

846 they still eat no fish of fowl—unless it be crabs, and these must be female—so long as
 784 their children remain feeble and weakly. . . . Otherwise, he said, the children would have stomach-ache, or else bodily deformations resembling the animals that their fathers had eaten.¹

Further details are given by du Tertre and by La Borde.⁴ For a first-born male child, the father's retreat lasted three months; for other births, only five or six days; and during this period, he lived in a separate building and avoided those who were leading a normal life. But for six months after the birth of any child of his, he had to abstain from eating the flesh of certain animals. The mother also fasted for some—du Tertre says forty—days, drinking only warmed water, and eating dry cassava. On no account, says La Borde, must she eat female crabs. The child was bathed immediately after birth; and, so that it should not catch cold if this took place at night, all the men in the carbet got up and went out to bathe also.

765 When a death occurred:

784 The children of the deceased or his wife cut their hair in sign of mourning. They also fast for one or two months. Father Raymond (Breton) asked them whether this fast helped the dead in any way, and they said: no; but that those who did not fast would grow old sooner, be unsure of foot and unable to see fish in the water, and that they would be liable to surprise by their enemies.⁵

Similarly:

881 When girls begin to have their flowers, they make them fast for one or two months;
 784 as also the boys, when these attain their adolescence; and they have them scarified with aguti-teeth.⁶

758 According to La Borde, if a Carib were wounded when away from home, he
 784 would send immediately to tell the members of his family, so that these might not, by continuing their normal diet and activities, become the involuntary cause of aggravating his affliction. It may be gathered, moreover, that they were not always disposed to co-operate fully in this matter; for we are told that:

The kin never, or but very rarely, visit their sick; and married (*du Tertre* says: newly married) people generally do not go at all, because, they say, *there emanates from their body a principle which afflicts the sick person the more*. For this reason, when one of the Baron's sons was sick, neither his brothers nor his sisters nor his father went to see him; only his mother looked after him, and she kept away from the father.⁷

784 We are also told that fasting was a prerequisite for the would-be *buciei* or
 824 shaman, and for candidates for chieftaincy.

¹ In Rennard, 1929, pp. 59-60.

⁴ du Tertre, 1667-71, vol. II, p. 412; La Borde, in Hennepin, 1704, pp. 587-593.

⁶ Armand de la Paix, in Rennard, 1929, pp. 72-73.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

These retreats and fasts culminated in a blood-letting ritual which was particularly severe in the case of an adult who had become a father for the first time, or in that of one who had "killed some Arawak." A chicken-hawk was sacrificed by crushing its head against that of the man, who then stood upon a pile of cassava-cakes whose centres only he had eaten during his fast, while his back was scarified with an aguti-tooth lancet until the blood ran down, and then rubbed with a decoction containing tobacco-juice, rocou-leaves (*Bixa orellana*), and the seeds of red-peppers (*Capsicum*) crushed together with the body of the sacrificed bird. Subsequently, he was given the latter's dried heart to eat, and finally had to take a drastic emetic (usually tobacco-juice) which made him "rendre tripes et boudins." After having undergone this ordeal, he had to fast for some days longer—although he might be "fed like a child" with some of his blood-soaked cassavas—while the others got drunk at his expense. Adolescents were treated somewhat more gently; but they too brought their sacrificial bird, and had their backs scarified; after which they had to remain fasting for some further time in their hammocks, and without changing the posture in which their sponsors had placed them, under pain of becoming deformed.⁹ [304]

Before attempting to interpret the somewhat complex syndrome of contagious magic implied by the foregoing review of seventeenth-century practices, it will be as well to set forth, in brief, the current forms of dietary and occupational restrictions found among the Dominica remnant of the Island Carib tribes and their more vigorous Central American offshoot, and the occasions for their application. 784

Blood-letting rituals such as that described above no longer exist, even in legend, among either of these groups.⁹ Nor are adolescents or neophytes subjected by them to any special regimen. On the other hand, dietary or occupational restrictions—or both—are required of the new parent of either sex, of the bereaved spouse (particularly in the case of a wife who loses her husband), and of menstruating women. It is perhaps worth noting that, nowadays, those placed on men concern *only* activities, whereas those placed on women concern *mainly* diet.

From the Black Carib of British Honduras, it was learned that:

Once a woman knows herself to be pregnant . . . both she and her mate must refrain from killing or eating the flesh of certain animals. An informant recounted how his uncle once had killed a snake in his garden, while a woman—not even a "partner"—was pregnant for him; and how, as a result, the child had been still-born, with flat head and nose and small eyes like those of a snake. In another case, it was said that a

⁸ Mainly from Breton, 1892, pp. 202-203.

⁹ As a personal practice, however, many hunters, in order to have luck in the chase, draw blood from their arms by making a series of close, superficial cuts with a razor-blade.

785

they liked for a further period of two or three months, and thereafter only continued to abstain from certain activities and meats for some time.

852

[302]

[307]

When the child began to be given fish to eat at about the age of two years, its hair was cut for the first time ceremonially, and its mother's temples shaved. The piercing of its ears, etc., apparently also took place at this ceremony (nikulukáyanŭ, núbukaétiŭ) which, according to Breton's description, was held concurrently with an elétuak festival.

796

[85]

[88]

783

The latter appears to have been a family rather than a tribal affair, although intended for the carrying out of all the *rites de passage*, such as initiation of infants (into the tribe) and adolescents (into manhood), and for the purification and reintegration of those who had for the first time become parents or had killed an enemy.

Il y a peu de Sauvages qui aient femmes et enfans, qui ne fassent ce festin icy, qui est un de leurs plus solennels: ils sont quelque fois des quatre mois à s'y préparer, on y rase le poil des tempes aux femmes, et à leur petits enfans ausquels on commence d'y faire manager du poisson.

[273]

Besides large quantities of wiku to be prepared for the feathered dancers (elétuakátiŭ tíomálití) and guests, basketry tables (marútu) and other utensils for the rites must be made, and those asked to help by making them (itawána-muku) repaid for their trouble by a special drinking-party (itchwenná). Moreover, after the elétuak festival all such articles were held to be fair plunder for the guests.

796

304

The name, elétuak, appears to connote a *putting out from* or *forth-putting*, (cf. éleletuába *incise! let [blood]! < éle power, strength*; and as a stem: *choose, extend, endure: élele speech or flame; átu[ra] [to]put forth*); and the essential part of the rites performed on these occasions consisted in blood-letting.⁶ Breton goes on to describe them thus:

796

301

... les grands, voire les mariez apportent quand et eux des oyseaux de rapine, les petits des petits, les mariez des gros et grands qu'ils ont pris dans le nid et nourris pour ce mystère. Le capitaine qui est prié pour cela prend les oyseaux et leur casse la teste sur leurs testes qui en restent ensanglantées. Il incise les petits et les grands, mène les petits dans leurs lits qui y doivent demeurer sans manger, et en la posture qu'il leur donne, sans laquelle ils croyent qu'ils demeureroient bossus ou contrefais, suivant celle qu'ils prendroient dans ce lit [i. e. hammock]. On écrase les oyseaux des grands (s'ils ont eu enfant, ou s'ils ont tué quelque Arroûague) avec quantité de gros grains de poivre [*Capsicum*], ou pimant [< Carib, boémwē *Capsicum* <

[777]
757

6 Hunters still make razor cuts in their arms to improve their luck, while incision and cupping are practised to relieve pain.